

Final Notes July 21, 1997

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM/PLAN FOR ANALYZING AND TESTING
HYPOTHESES (PATH) MEETING NOTES

July 8, 1997, 10:00 a.m.-2 p.m.
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICES
PORTLAND, OREGON

I. Greeting and Introductions.

The July 8 meeting of the IT/PATH Group, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by NMFS consultant Ed Sheets. A list of attendees is attached as Enclosure A. The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items.

Today's meeting is in preparation for the IT meeting on July 10, which will in turn lay the groundwork for what will either be an Executive Committee meeting, or a government-to-government consultation, on the 23rd of July, said Sheets. There are two main topics on the agenda for that latter meeting -- first, a discussion of the decision process, what it is and when it should conclude; second, the governance structure, and ways to improve it in response to the issues raised by the Lower River Treaty Tribes.

The main purpose of today's meeting is to follow up on the June 18 IT/PATH meeting, and to tie up some loose ends in preparation for Thursday's Implementation Team meeting, Sheets continued. Since that last meeting, Dave Marmorek has produced some additional analysis of the PATH schedule, and when some of the key analytical work products will be available -- in particular, the biological section. We'll pass along that updated schedule to the IT on Thursday.

In addition, I've done some more writing on this document (Enclosure B), the draft Discussion Paper on a Process for Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Restoration Decisions, said Sheets. To date, there hasn't been a lot of focus on how the region will make the 1999 decision, what its goals should be and what the criteria for making the decision should be. That leads to the question of whether or not we're really gathering all of the information we'll need to make that decision. We need to start thinking about these issues as a region, Sheets said.

What I'd like to do today is hand this out and take a few minutes to work our way through it, in the hope that it will stimulate some productive discussion in advance of the IT meeting, he continued. I'll then incorporate the comments received today and prepare a new draft for distribution to the IT on Thursday.

As far as the meeting on the 23rd goes, there are a couple of things we may want to present, said Sheets. One possibility is a crisp yet detailed synopsis of the differences between the two main competing biological hypotheses, including the technical and scientific assumptions behind each. Another goal for the 23rd was to begin a broader, big-picture discussion of the process for making the 1999 decision -- we've been calling it the 1999 decision, he said, but as most of you are aware, there are many in the region who would like to make the

decision sooner.

Sheets spent a few minutes describing the contents of the discussion paper, the background for the 1999 decision, who will be making the decision, and some potential decisionmaking strategies, as well as some alternative goals, information needs and decisionmaking criteria. Obviously, we also need to discuss the schedule for making this decision, and the ramifications of accelerating the current schedule -- what will we know in 1999 that we won't know a year from now? he continued.

The question of who will make the actual decision is also worth exploring, said Sheets. Many people in the region are assuming that, under the schedule in the Biological Opinion, this will be a recommendation made by NMFS and/or the Corps of Engineers. If the goal of this overall decision process is recovery and delisting, and if the final analysis indicates that expanded bargaining will achieve that goal, then it's fairly clear that the Corps has the authority to do bargaining, and implementation of the 1999 decision would mainly be a function of securing adequate funding to expand the current bargaining effort.

On the other hand, if the conclusion is that bargaining alone will not achieve recovery and delisting, and Drawdown becomes the recommended alternative, at least some parties believe that, because Drawdown would require Congressional authorization, it cannot be considered a reasonable and prudent alternative, said Sheets. If that is in fact true, then Drawdown isn't something that could be a part of an Endangered Species Act recommendation. If the goal of this effort is recovery and delisting, and the only way to achieve recovery and delisting is an activity that can't be considered a reasonable and prudent alternative, the ESA provides for convening the God Squad. The alternative to that is trying to build a regional consensus that will lead to legislation to move forward with Drawdown -- a decision that would not be based on the authority of the Endangered Species Act, Sheets said.

If the goal of this effort goes beyond recovery and delisting, to sustainable and harvestable stocks, to normative river conditions or to some other goal, then I think it's arguable that we're beyond the ESA authorities, and we again move into a realm where regional consensus is necessary to get administration and Congressional approval, he continued.

These topics are extremely important, because there is in fact a lot of confusion back in Washington D.C. about what you're trying to accomplish with this effort, said Jean Edwards of Rep. Elizabeth Furse's staff. What's the basis for your statement that implementing a Drawdown alternative may not be considered reasonable and prudent? asked Witt Anderson of the Corps. It's primarily speculation I've heard within NMFS, Sheets replied. I don't think NMFS has reached any conclusions in that regard, but at least some of the NMFS attorneys have raised questions along those lines. The way it's stated in the regulations is, is it consistent with the intent of the original action? said Brian Brown of NMFS. If you're proposing a construction project, then in this case, the reasonable and prudent alternative is not to build it. So the reasonable and prudent test isn't the fact that Congress has authorized it -- it's the fact that we're changing the purpose for the action, which is hydropower, flood control and navigation, said Anderson.

Basically, if we're in a consultation, and we've reached the point of having found jeopardy, and are seeking a reasonable and prudent alternative, the action agency has a say in

what is reasonable and prudent, said Brown. It's not a hard and fast line, but certainly an action agency would have that argument available to it -- that it's not reasonable and prudent because it's so far outside the intended purpose of the action. It sounds like this is a component of the decision framework that needs to be fleshed out, so that everyone understands it, said Anderson.

On the other hand, if the Corps didn't think Drawdown was reasonable and prudent, they would exclude it from further consideration, said COE's Greg Graham. That's a fair point, said Brown -- I think NMFS has assumed all along that one fix or the other is implementable in the long term, and that's the basis for the finding of no jeopardy. So this may be a red herring, although it's a red herring that was raised by NMFS attorneys, said Sheets.

Perhaps we should flag it as an issue that Corps and NMFS attorneys need to discuss further, he suggested. I think it's something that needs to be researched, with the goal of developing a briefing paper for regional review, said Anderson. In response to a question, Sheets said he would rewrite the paragraph under "The Decision Makers" in Enclosure B, in which this issue is discussed, and move it into the "Information Needs" section of the document. What I will say is that, given the fact that Congress will make the final decision, the more regional consensus we have, the better, he said -- even if we conclude that, under the ESA, Drawdown proves to be a reasonable and prudent alternative, that still won't get us the necessary votes in Congress.

Anyway, I'll rework this paragraph, but the key question of whether we're trying to do this under the authority of the ESA, or whether we're trying for a higher goal of regional consensus which will lead to Congressional action, remains, said Sheets. How do we resolve that? asked Chip McConnaha of the Power Planning Council staff. That's not clear at this time, replied Sheets, but it leads directly to our next topic of discussion, which is potential elements of the regional decisionmaking process.

The first step is that we need to start talking to people about that very question, he continued. What (Enclosure B) proposes is a consultation process in which the interested parties would begin to discuss what process, goals, information needs and decision criteria are appropriate, as well as how the public should be involved in the process. My suggestion is that that dialogue be concluded by the fall of 1997, so that we have some consensus about the right direction in which we should be headed.

I don't know whether that means the decisionmakers need to reach consensus on those goals, or if it means that the decisionmakers need to agree simply that they will compare the outputs of the analysis against several goals -- the Council goal, the NMFS goal, the CBFWA goal etc., Sheets said. We'll certainly enhance our chances of reaching a regional consensus if we can go into this process with agreement on its goal, but that may be too difficult.

When you say "decisionmakers," are you referring to the sovereigns? asked Edwards. I tried to leave that purposely vague, Sheets replied. Ideally, everyone will agree, although I think that's unlikely. So that leads to the question of what is the minimum viable amount of regional support needed to get the administration to buy in, and I don't know what that level is. It probably starts with the sovereigns -- the groups who used to be represented at the Executive Committee meetings.

I would like to see this take place in a very structured way, said NMFS's Lynn Krasnow. I would like to ensure that the participants in the process include anyone who will attack it if they're not involved. That doesn't mean that I think we'll ever get complete agreement on goals, given the wide variety of basic beliefs about how to bring about salmon recovery in the region, she said. What I'm talking about, basically, is a very structured decision analysis; while others may disagree, I believe that we will go around in circles forever if we don't structure this conversation some way.

If we all agree that it is important to spend some time, at this point, to try to structure a process that will allow us to make the 1999 decision, then we can work through that, said Sheets. Frankly, I don't see a lot of alternatives, although one alternative is to let the process stay on auto-pilot and see what we get in 1999 -- hope for the best, in other words.

What I envision is that, first, you'll need the decision on which the information will be based to be portrayed in some context, said Edwards. I see one end of that context spectrum as the ESA recovery threshold -- a fairly minimal population necessary to sustain the species. At the other end of the spectrum, you might have sustainable fisheries. I can visualize a matrix within which you would lay out key components, information and schedule, to provide a context. From there, you can have this conversation among the decisionmakers, the foundation of which is a common set of information.

Is that an alternative to starting with an agreed-upon goal? asked Brown. I'm saying that step one is consultation with the sovereigns, said Edwards. When you consult with them, what do you talk about? You're presenting them with the information they need to make a decision. Part of that information should certainly be what benefits the various alternative actions are expected to provide. I guess I'm thinking about the matrix you put together at the end of May, in expanded form, she said -- something that shows potential benefits of Drawdown vs. transport vs. whatever other alternative recovery mechanisms are available, in a concise, understandable format. That kind of a matrix would give the decisionmakers at the next stage the information they'll need to start horse-trading.

The problem we have right now is that there is a lot of speculation and conflicting information out there, Edwards continued. What you're proposing here, I think, would be extremely helpful in dispelling some of that.

I can say with some certainty that we won't have all of the information needed by the decisionmakers by the fall of 1997, said Sheets. However, we can certainly provide a decision matrix, which specifies what information will be filled in later. Certainly a major purpose of the matrix would be to identify those gaps, and specify when they'll be filled in, said Edwards.

What I'm hearing people say is that it isn't necessary that the decisionmakers should agree at the outset on a common goal, said ODFW's Tony Nigro -- what the decisionmakers need to do is ensure that the individual goals each of them bring to the table are very well articulated. Where there is agreement, that would be obvious. Where there isn't agreement, at least you would know where the differences lie, and could begin working on some sort of consensus-building.

Another meeting participant pointed out that there is already agreement on one

fundamental goal -- improving the survival of listed salmon stocks in the Columbia River Basin. The only question is how you quantify that goal, he said -- for some, it's recovery and delisting; for others, it's a higher target, such as a sustainable fishery. We may be characterizing this decision as more complex than it actually is -- improved transport is going to get you what it gets you, and Drawdown is going to get you what it gets you. We simply need to lay that information on the table, and let the decisionmakers take it from there.

What we've asked PATH to do is two things, basically, said Nigro -- first, to characterize the performance of the listed stocks up to now -- the retrospective analysis, or what's happened in the past, and why. Second, we've asked them to take that past performance and project it into the future -- what is likely to happen as a result of a particular set of recovery actions. That's the prospective analysis. A third question, then, is, is that good enough? Will the actions under consideration get us where we want to go? The answer to that question depends on the standards against which you measure the outcome of the prospective analysis -- how the various parties to this decision define success, in other words.

One of the reasons for having this discussion today is the question of, if various parties to the decision have a different goal, a different measurement of the ultimate success of this effort, what additional information will they need prior to making their decision? said Sheets. If there are additional informational needs, we need to hear about those as soon as possible. It may be that we can fill in some of those gaps by making adjustments to the PATH process, or to the Lower Snake Feasibility Study; we may also come to the conclusion that we cannot provide that information.

The question of precisely what decision needs to be made in 1999 is also something that needs further discussion, Sheets continued. To some, it's a fairly narrow ESA delisting/recovery/jeopardy decision; to others, it may be the larger decision about what we're going to do with the hydrosystem to fulfill fish and wildlife management goals in a broader, basinwide context.

Perhaps the way to characterize this in the document is to say that, ideally, the regional decisionmakers could agree on a goal, said Sheets. If they cannot, then it is vitally important to clearly articulate the alternative goals people will be using to judge success.

The discussion continued in this vein for some minutes. Ultimately, Brown summarized some of its main points: that, while other interested parties, such as the Power Planning Council and the Columbia River Alliance, will have input to that decision, the actual decisionmakers, most likely, will include the three sovereigns: the federal agencies, states and tribes; in terms of the goals of this process, agreement on a common goal is the ideal, but lacking that agreement, a clear statement of individual tribal and agency goals may be the alternative.

I'd like to redirect the goal discussion somewhat, and consider the question of whether our goal in this process is simply to decide what to do about listed Snake River chinook and sockeye salmon, or the more global question of what to do about Columbia Basin salmon, or Columbia Basin fish and wildlife as a whole, said Brown. One possibility that might work for NMFS would be if there were a regional process set up that was making decisions to meet broader fish and wildlife goals, and it satisfied, in the opinion of the National Marine Fisheries Service, NMFS's obligations under ESA. But the question is, are we trying to set up this broader

forum, which will consider what to do in the Columbia Basin in general, or are we going to focus only on the more specific question of how the federal government and NMFS satisfy their ESA obligations? asked Brown.

I'm sensing, from what I've heard today, that it would be very helpful if the three sovereigns could spend some time, early in this process, trying to answer that question, said Sheets. One other thing that will influence those discussions, which we haven't really touched on today, is cost -- how the region will finance recovery, and who will pay, said Anderson. I'm leading up to that, said Sheets.

Another thing I'm hearing today is a conflict between Ed's belief that we need to articulate a common goal, and Jean's point that the goal doesn't matter -- we need to simply lay out the information and let people make their decision, said Brown. What I'm saying is that the goals have pretty much already been defined by each of the three sovereigns, said Edwards. However, if you ask the question, what is required to bring about delisting, as NMFS might advocate, the answer will be very different than the answer to the question of what is required to bring about a sustainable fishery, which may be the goal of the tribes, said McConnaha. It's true that the goals may already be defined, but we can't overlook the fact that those goals have some major differences.

Actually, the group that has been working to finalize the Recovery Plan has articulated its goal in three parts, to encompass all of NMFS's responsibilities, said Brown: sustainable fisheries, recovery of protected species, and the restoration and maintenance of healthy coastal ecosystems. The Recovery Plan goal tries to wrap in all three of these concepts. However, I would observe that a large portion of the draft Recovery Plan is focused on recovery and delisting, said Sheets. If the region's goal, in making this 1999 decision, is in fact to address the broader question of what to do about Columbia Basin fish and wildlife, rather than recovery and delisting of specific endangered species, then people need to be aware that we're faced with a much bigger decision than some are currently contemplating, Sheets said.

I don't necessarily agree with the idea that that means we have a bigger decision, said WDFW's Tom Cooney -- to me, what to do with the Snake River Dams and John Day Dam is the core of the 1999 decision. The way we've approached it in PATH is that you start with the different alternative actions; the decision about which to choose in 1999 is the key. You look at those under different hypotheses about what's going on, but you also take into account the range of possible improvements in habitat, as well as the alternative harvest scenarios. Yes, we're making a decision about the four Lower Snake projects and John Day, but it's in the context of all

four Hs. In my opinion, we shouldn't spend a lot of time debating these goals -- I think we should spend more time fleshing out what information we'll be providing.

In terms of Chip's point, we need to look at what Judge Marsh said, Cooney continued -- he said there is no bright line between recovery and survival. I'm having trouble seeing where NMFS would draw that line, and say, below this point, the level of recovery satisfies the ESA, but you have to go X amount further to meet the CBFWA goal. I've never been able to figure out

how you do that, and maybe we need to develop some technical analysis to see if we even have a problem with this issue. The bottom line is, we're going to have to improve considerably on our

current situation, just to get to the basic survival standard.

After a break for lunch, Sheets summarized the status of the discussion as follows: is the 1999 decision expanded bargaining vs. Drawdown at the four Lower Snake River projects, focused on listed Snake River stocks? Or is it expanded bargaining vs. Drawdown at the Lower Snake projects plus John Day Dam, with a broader basinwide goal in mind?

Nigro suggested that it might be possible to subject the available recovery actions to a two-tiered analysis which would incorporate both of these goals, by looking first at the action's projected effects on listed Snake River stocks, and second, at its effects, positive and negative, on other populations and other recovery actions -- would certain actions be precluded under one scenario or another?

In response to a question about harvest, Cooney said that assumptions about environmental variability will be one of the key drivers of the harvest rules included in the 1999 decision. One of the outcomes will be what amounts, essentially, to a frequency distribution of harvest -- given those rules, that set of uncertainties and the projected effects of the action chosen, what can people expect by way of harvest? In other words, you'll have a picture of how harvest will react to these variables. And how close will that get us to answering the question of how close one option or another gets us to sustainable harvest? asked Sheets. If the sovereigns are willing to define a harvest goal in those terms, then you could have a standard against which to compare the various recovery options, replied Cooney. Or, it could be the eye of the beholder -- it gets very complicated, by the time you factor in how much harvest takes place in the mainstem, how much in the subbasin etc. -- it might be better to leave it at a rate.

The group spent a few minutes discussing the information products currently in the pipeline that will be used to make the 1999 decision, under the original schedule. Sheets summarized this discussion by saying that it looks like we'll be in a position to evaluate the biological effects of the various recovery options on listed stocks and on broader goals. It sounds, however, like there is no schedule to have all of the economic/mitigation work done by any time soon, at least for John Day. Based on the most recent information I've heard out of the Congressional appropriations process, we're going to be well into 1998 before we can start any real work on the John Day study, said Anderson.

It sounds like we could reach a point in 1999 where the decision to go forward with Drawdown of the four Lower Snake projects is hung up because it looks like we'll need to draw down John Day as well in order to reach our biological objectives, and we won't have the information in hand to get the authorization we need to do John Day, observed one meeting participant. We may have the information we need to make a decision, but we won't have the economic information needed to get the authorization to proceed with the work. If that's the case, Congress may well say, how can we recommend Drawdown on the Snake if we don't know what the total package looks like, and what it's going to cost? -- it's a Catch-22.

And it's not just John Day where these questions persist, said Graham -- what are we doing with Bonneville long-term? What are we doing with The Dalles? It's not just deep Drawdown at John Day. Aren't there some rough estimates of the cost of deep Drawdown and mitigation at John Day? asked Fred Olney of USFWS. Very rough, replied Sheets -- I've heard

anywhere from \$500 million to \$1 billion.

Nigro made the point that the results of the John Day economic analysis may be moot, because BPA can tell the region what it can afford to pay right now. We're going to tell you what we think is needed, he said -- we're not going to tell you what we think you can afford to pay.

Edwards suggested that it would be very useful for the group to develop a concise statement of the problems that will confront the region if it is not possible to develop the analysis of the economic impacts of John Day Drawdown in a timely manner. I would touch on each of the relevant components, she said -- the ecological studies, mitigation for rail, navigation and power impacts. I realize that stuff is out there a ways, she said, but it hasn't been pulled together in a single concise package -- there are a couple of senators who have strong opinions about this, and it would be helpful to be able to present this information in rebuttal to their views.

The discussion turned to the upcoming meeting on July 23, and whether or not a presentation should be made which would lay out the science, in some detail, behind the two competing hypotheses. My impression was that Donna Darm's intention is that the entire July 23 meeting will be devoted to just that subject, said Sheets. I remember Donna starting out the conversation saying that that was what she wanted, said Cooney, but others suggested that it would be better to focus discussion at that meeting on the decision process, what can be done to make the decision sooner, and what informational components will and will not be available if we try to make the decision prior to 1999. Edwards said that a letter from Will Stelle, dated 10 days ago, states that his intention is that the July 23 meeting will cover a description of the major options, as well as the information we expect to have on each of those major options; he also hopes to begin a discussion of the appropriate long-term goals for fish and wildlife restoration and the criteria that should be used to make a decision. Stelle's letter says the meeting will also focus on the appropriate schedule for mainstem decisions, and that he has asked the staffs of the fish and wildlife managers and federal agencies to identify what information will be available in 1999, as well as how much information will be available to the region in early 1998.

In addition, said Brown, Donna hopes that the meeting will help those who will be making the 1999 decision to understand the differences between the competing biological hypotheses, and to provide a context about why we're hoping, through PATH, to get some additional information to inform a decision. This being the case, I think it would be helpful to spend a fair amount of time educating the decisionmakers on the alternatives.

Your feeling, then, is that it would be appropriate to lay out the fact that we're looking at Drawdown, transportation and the possibility of Drawdown at John Day, and we should also lay out the fact that there are these competing hypotheses about what is causing the decline of the listed stocks, which could effect whatever decision is ultimately made? asked Cooney. That's correct, Brown replied, as well as the fact that PATH is probably not going to provide all the answers we're seeking -- PATH is not going to give us a quantitative analysis that says, this one is right, and that one is wrong. Instead, PATH will give us a qualitative, weight-of-evidence argument.

What we're going to be faced with is a situation where, quite possibly, PATH will conclude that the Drawdown option will give us a high probability of success under more than

one hypothesis about what's going on in the system, while the transportation option will have a very high probability of success under one set of assumptions about what's going on, and a low probability of success under the other, said Cooney. Where would that leave us? Some people would argue that it points to a decision to implement Drawdown, because that gives us the highest probability of success. Others would argue that more information is needed. All I'm saying is, we're going to have to be careful about how we characterize this to the Executive Committee.

At the moment, the description of the competing hypotheses and what information we'll have at various points in this process is not in this memo (Enclosure B), said Sheets. Is there someone who can help me write that? Nigro suggested that Sheets contact Dave Marmorek; Sheets agreed to do so.

Cooney went to the board to sketch out one possible decision matrix for presentation at the July 23 meeting (attached as Enclosure C). The idea is to create a graphical summary that would allow people to look across all of the different ideas about what's driving the system, with each recovery option, and how it would perform, clearly identified, Cooney explained.

The group spent some minutes discussing the most appropriate information to present at the July 23 meeting, and the most effective way to present it. Ultimately, it was pointed out that one of the agenda items at the July 10 IT meeting is, in effect, a dress rehearsal of what will be presented at the July 23 meeting; Marmorek and others will be walking through some of these various informational components at that time, including an informational matrix similar to the one described by Cooney at today's meeting. The group agreed to table further substantive discussion of this issue until Thursday's IT meeting.

Moving on, Sheets redirected the conversation back to Enclosure B; the groups spent a few minutes discussing the section headed "Potential Elements for a Regional Decision Making Process. In particular, Sheets asked for input on item 3 under this heading, "Agree on Appropriate Decision Criteria" (see page 3 of Enclosure B). Would it be possible for a smaller subsection of this group to work through the biological, treaty obligations, economic and other environmental decision criteria listed here? asked Sheets. Or would it be better to develop those through a more formal process? We need to know what criteria the 1999 decision will be based on in order to decide what additional information will be needed.

One meeting participant made the point that the biological and the economic decision criteria should not necessarily be treated as equivalent in importance within the decisionmaking process -- we have certain legal considerations guiding our actions on the biological side, he said, but that isn't necessarily the case with the economic side. Obviously, we'll need to address the relative importance of the different categories of criteria, and how they should be weighted, in the final decision, said Olney.

After a few minutes of debate, it was agreed that the list of decision criteria on page 3 of Enclosure B would provide a reasonable strawman for discussion at the July 10 IT meeting; Marmorek's more detailed list of possible decision criteria (reproduced on page 14 of Enclosure B) will also be used as a basis for this discussion.

As the letter from Will Stelle explained, said Brown, one of the intents of the July 23 meeting is to describe the alternatives, and at some point in the presentation, we need to lay out which alternatives we're going to do analysis on. Can those alternatives be summarized as Snake River Drawdown, Snake River Drawdown plus John Day, and expanded transportation? asked Sheets. Actually, I think there are probably eight or nine different alternatives, and we should probably lay out the entire list, said Brown.

In terms of the decision framework, once we identify the alternatives that will be analyzed, we need to talk about the areas of consideration, Brown continued: biological, financial/economic, legal, feasibility etc. We can talk about the overall framework for decisionmaking, then describe the framework for biological decisionmaking, including Tom's matrix and a brief digression to describe the two major competing hypotheses, the major uncertainty that is preventing a decision at this point. Once we finish with that, I think we should move on to performance measures, criteria, standards, the information needed to flesh those out and, finally, timing, said Brown. Essentially, Dave Marmorek has put a strawman on the table, and we need to ask, at the July 23 meeting, if there is a desire to develop that further.

That's a good outline for the presentation, said Sheets; I think we'll also want to include an overall discussion of what the process should be, as well as a discussion of the scope of the decision. Did we resolve that goals discussion? asked one meeting participant. Not yet, Sheets replied. Shouldn't we try to resolve it before we make this presentation? asked another participant. I don't think we're the ones who will be making that decision, replied Sheets. What we agreed to say at the meeting on the 23rd was that, ideally, the decisionmakers will be able to agree on a common goal prior to making the 1999 decision; if that's not possible, that it would be beneficial for each of the decisionmakers to describe their goal as clearly as possible.

Graham made the point that, when all is said and done, in order to secure the full participation of everyone who needs to be involved in this decisionmaking process, including the treaty tribes, it will be necessary to frame the 1999 decision as a decision about Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife restoration, rather than simply a decision about listed Snake River salmon stocks.

The discussion returned to the question of what information regarding John Day Drawdown might realistically be available in time to support the 1999 decision. There will be some information from PATH regarding the effects of John Day Drawdown on delisting, said Sheets, as well as its effects on other stocks, though PATH will not provide any information on impacts to resident fish and wildlife. The economic analysis will tell us most of what we need to know about the four Lower Snake projects, but will not address the capital portion of John Day. Barring some divine intervention from Capitol Hill, we're going to have to find some way to fill in the John Day resident fish and wildlife gaps and the capital cost gap if we're going to have all of the information we need to fully integrate John Day Drawdown into the 1999 decision, Sheets said.

The topic then turned to the desire of some parties in the region to advance the timing of the 1999 decision. There are two pieces to that issue, said Sheets. First, some parties in the region wanted to advance the timing of the decision before there was an MOA II, or a Bonneville subscription issue. Second, there is the question of the Bonneville subscription process; there are several tools to deal with that. BPA needs to be able to provide its customers with some

predictability for their rates; one way to do that is to continue with the current fish cap; another way is to have a contingent stranded cost mechanism.

Another aspect to this part of the discussion is the fact that, as Jean said earlier, we need to address the fact that it is not clear, to many people both in and out of the region, why we can't make the 1999 decision sooner, or why it hasn't been made already, said Brown. My objective for the meeting on July 23 is to get everyone to the same level of understanding about the overall decision framework, and what is being done to try to inform the decision. Once everyone is at the same level of understanding on those issues, then we can have an informed discussion about what will happen if we advance the timing of the decision by a year. Again, however, we also need to address the issue of the scope of the decision, said Graham -- listed Snake River stocks only, or the restoration of fish and wildlife in the Columbia River Basin.

Sheets directed the meeting participants' attention to page 4 of Enclosure B, the section dealing with decision schedule. What I've tried to do here, without going into a great amount of detail, is describe what information we expect to have from PATH by 1999, and the implications of accelerating the decision schedule to March 1998, he said. According to the schedule, we will have preliminary drafts of the decision analysis for spring/summer and fall chinook, as well as the retrospective analysis for steelhead, by March 1998, Sheets said. However, there will be no prospective or decision analysis for steelhead, there will also be less peer review and less opportunity for iterative improvement of the PATH work products.

I'm nervous about a couple of things, Sheets continued. First, this assumes that PATH will stay on schedule. Second, does this accurately characterize what we'll have by March 1998? Have I captured all of the important pieces that will be missing in March 1998? Cooney pointed out that "preliminary drafts" means that the above-listed work products would not have undergone outside review; the Scientific Review Panel's review of these PATH outputs is scheduled for April 1998. I'll add that, and run this by Dave Marmorek as well, said Sheets. He said he would also add a sentence to the "Alternative for Accelerating Economic Analysis" portion of this section covering the fact that capital cost estimates for John Day Drawdown will not be available in time to inform an accelerated decision.

Is March 1998 the appropriate alternative in terms of being a possible date by which we could make the 1999 decision sooner? asked Sheets. After a brief debate, no specific alternatives were suggested to the March 1998 date, and the meeting was adjourned. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.